

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Olympic National Park
Washington



Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement

May 2006



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The captioned photos are by John Teichert and were donated by him to Olympic National Park.

Draft
General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement
Olympic National Park
Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, and Mason Counties, Washington

Olympic National Park was authorized by an act of Congress on June 29, 1938 (ch 812, 52 Stat. 1241,). The last comprehensive management plan for the park was completed in 1976. Much has changed since 1976 — visitor use patterns have changed, people want to bring new recreational activities to the park, and additional lands have been added to the park. Each of these changes has implications for how visitors access and use the national park and the facilities needed to support those uses, how resources are managed, and how the National Park Service manages its operations. A new plan is needed.

This document examines four alternatives for managing the national park for the next 15 to 20 years. It also analyzes the impacts of implementing each of the alternatives. The “**no-action**” **alternative**, **alternative A**, consists of existing park management and trends and serves as a basis for comparison in evaluating the changes/impacts of the other alternatives. Park resources would continue to be protected while educational and recreational opportunities are provided in superlative natural settings. No changes in current management strategies or visitor services would occur. Currently funded projects would be implemented.

Under **alternative B** park management would emphasize natural and cultural resource protection. The park would be managed as a large ecosystem preserve emphasizing wilderness management for resource conservation and protection, with a reduced number of facilities to support visitation. Natural resources protection would receive increased emphasis, and some previously disturbed areas would undergo restoration. The comprehensive maintenance, protection and preservation measures, in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards would be employed for those structures listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Wilderness recreational experiences would be enhanced while some visitor access and services in sensitive areas would be reduced.

Under **alternative C** park management would emphasize visitor opportunities. Park resources would be important natural, cultural, and recreational attractions for increased regional tourism through dispersed visitation, increased partnerships, improved park and partnership facilities, and increased year-

round access. Increases in frontcountry visitation and improved access to the wilderness would be accommodated. Natural resources in undeveloped areas would be protected through management actions and resource education programs. The comprehensive maintenance, protection and preservation measures, in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards would be employed for those structures listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Alternative D is the National Park Service’s preferred alternative, which is a combination of the other alternatives. Management emphasis in this alternative would be both on protecting resources and improving visitor experiences. This would be accomplished by accommodating diverse visitor use, providing sustainable access on existing roads, improving mass transit opportunities, and concentrating improved educational and recreational opportunities on the developed park edges. More information would be available to visitors so that they could better plan their visits. Frontcountry visitation and wilderness use would be managed for resource protection and to improve visitor experiences. The comprehensive maintenance, protection and preservation measures, in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards would be employed for those structures listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

This *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* has been distributed to other agencies and interested organizations and individuals for their review and comment. The public comment period for this document will last for 90 days after the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) “Notice of Availability” has been published in the *Federal Register*. Readers are encouraged to send written comments on this draft plan to Olympic National Park General Management Plan, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, P.O. Box 25287, Denver, Colorado 80225; or fax comments to 303-969-2736. You may also comment via the form on the <http://parkplanning.nps.gov> website, or e-mail comments to olym_gmp@nps.gov. Please note that NPS practice is to make comments, including names and addresses of respondents, available for public review; see following “How to Comment on this Plan” for further information.

HOW TO COMMENT ON THIS PLAN

Comments on this plan are welcome and will be accepted for 90 days after the EPA's "Notice of Availability" appears in the *Federal Register*. If you wish to respond to the material in this document, you may submit your comments by any one of several methods. You may mail written comments to:

Carla McConnell
Olympic National Park — GMP
National Park Service
Denver Service Center — Planning
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225

Or faxed to the NPS Denver Service Center at 303-969-2736

You may also comment via the form on the <http://parkplanning.nps.gov> website or email comments to olym_gmp@nps.gov. If you decide not to use the website form, please submit Internet comments as a text file avoiding the use of special characters or any form of encryption. Include your name and return address in your Internet message, and if possible, request a return receipt when sending your message. If you do not receive a confirmation from the system that we have received your Internet message, contact Nancy Hendricks at 360-565-3008.

You may hand-deliver comments at public meetings, which will be announced in the media following release of this document. Also, comments may be hand-delivered to the Olympic National Park headquarters, 600 E. Park Avenue, Port Angeles, Washington 98632-9798.

NPS practice is to make all comments, including the names and addresses of respondents who provide that information, available for public review following the conclusion of the NEPA process. Individuals may request that their name and/or address be withheld from public disclosure. If you wish to do this, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. Commentors using the website can make such a request by checking the box "keep my contact information private." The National Park Service will honor such requests to the extent allowable by law, but you should be aware that NPS may still be required to disclose your name and address pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act.

This method for public comment submittal listed above stems from recent court rulings concerning the release of public comments, and it is included as recommended by the Office of the Solicitor, Department of the Interior.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* is to provide management direction for resource protection and visitor use at Olympic National Park for the next 15 to 20 years.

Presented and analyzed within this plan are four alternatives for the management and use of Olympic National Park. The alternatives present different ways to manage resources and visitor use and to improve facilities and infrastructure at Olympic. The alternatives are based on the purpose and significance of this 922,651-acre park and include issues and concerns identified by the general public and National Park Service (NPS) staff as part of the initial planning efforts.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR A GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

A general management plan for Olympic National Park is needed to fulfill the following purposes:

- Confirm the purpose and significance of the national park.
- Clearly define resource conditions and visitor experiences to be achieved in Olympic National Park.
- Provide a framework for park managers to use when making decisions about such issues as how to best protect national park resources, how to provide a diverse range of visitor experience opportunities, how to manage visitor use, and what kinds of facilities, if any, to develop in the national park.
- Ensure that this foundation for decision making has been developed in

consultation with interested stakeholders and adopted by the NPS leadership after an adequate analysis of the benefits, impacts, and economic costs of alternative courses of action.

- Serve as the basis for later more detailed management documents, such as five-year strategic plans and implementation plans.

The last comprehensive planning effort for Olympic National Park was the park's *Master Plan*, completed in 1976. Much has changed since 1976, and the *Master Plan* fails to address many of the issues and concerns now facing the park.

PLANNING PROCESS

The process of preparing this *General Management Plan* for Olympic National Park began in June 2001 with publication of a "Notice of Intent" to prepare an environmental impact statement in the *Federal Register*. A newsletter describing the planning effort was mailed shortly thereafter.

Public open houses were held during September and October 2001 in Port Angeles, Forks, Clallam Bay, Quinault, Aberdeen, Silverdale, and Seattle, Washington, and were attended by 161 people. During this initial information gathering process, the planning team received more than 500 individual comments from members of the public.

The process showed that any long-term park management program needs to address a number of key issues and questions:

Natural Resources

1. Using science to monitor and manage natural resources, to what extent should

SUMMARY

Olympic National Park restore natural ecological process to systems altered by humans, or let human-altered ecological processes dominate?

Cultural Resources

1. Once cultural resources are identified and evaluated for significance, effective cultural resource management must address the following questions: what should be done to properly care for a cultural resource, and how do cultural resources fit into the overall scheme of park management?"

2. How should cultural resources in wilderness be managed?

Tribal Relations

1. How can the park better work with the tribes to improve coordination and cooperation?

2. What are the ways and to what extent can the park work with the tribes to provide visitor opportunities and protect park resources?

Partnerships

1. What are the ways and extent to which the park could develop and work effectively with public and private partnerships to protect park resources and private property and provide for visitor enjoyment?

Wilderness

1. Consistent with wilderness values, what experiences and resource conditions should occur in the Olympic National Park wilderness?

2. Consistent with wilderness values, what facilities should there be in the wilderness?

3. What adjustments, if any, could be made to current wilderness boundaries to

fulfill the park's mission, purpose, and significance?

Visitor Experiences

1. How can the park accommodate anticipated visitation increases as well as diverse visitor needs and expectations, while maintaining high-quality visitor experiences and preserving park resources?

2. What types and levels of educational and recreational activities could the park accommodate, while still protecting park resources and promoting stewardship?

3. What are the ways and degree to which the park could provide education and interpretation to park visitors versus providing outreach or off-site programs?

4. Without impairing park resources, what types, sizes, and locations of facilities could be provided to support park activities and visitor experiences? Should they be located in or outside the park? To what extent could uses be separated to avoid visitor or operational conflicts?

Access to and around the Park

1. What are the ways and to what extent can safe, efficient, park-oriented visitor experiences be provided in the park through the use of public or private transit, bicycles, or other nontraditional transportation options?

2. To what extent can there be public road and trail access to visitor destinations while minimizing or mitigating impacts on natural processes or park resources?

Boundary Adjustments

1. What adjustments, if any, could be made to current park boundaries to fulfill the park's mission, purpose, and significance?

After these questions were raised, a second newsletter was distributed in January 2002 and a second series of workshops was held in January 2002, with meetings in Shelton, Clallam Bay, Silverdale, Port Angeles, Forks, Amanda Park, Brinnon, and Seattle. These workshops encouraged participants to explore and present their ideas for park zoning and management alternatives and were attended by 187 people.

The draft alternative concepts for managing the park were delivered in a third newsletter that was distributed in May 2003 and a planning process update newsletter was distributed in November 2004.

With publication of the *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement*, the National Park Service presents a range of alternatives, including the NPS preferred alternative, for managing Olympic National Park. They are summarized here, and explained in further detail in Chapter 2.

ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives in this *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* are closely related because they all meet the park's purpose and significance, as described in Chapter 1, and because they were all developed using the desired conditions. Some components of each alternative may meet the desired conditions more successfully than another alternative. For example, alternative B may better meet the desired condition of protecting floodplains due to road closures and restoring the natural river processes, but it may not fully meet desired conditions for visitor access and opportunities.

In addition to the components of each alternative, management zones were developed to help define the management approaches to be achieved and maintained

in each area of the park. Eight management zones have been developed for Olympic National Park, and these zones are applied to different areas of the park in each action alternative.

- development
- day-use
- low-use
- river (alternative B only)
- intertidal reserve
- wilderness trail
- primitive wilderness
- primeval wilderness

This section describes the basic concept of each alternative, and provides a summary of differences between alternatives. A detailed discussion of management zones and alternatives for each park area and for the park's wilderness is included in Chapter 2.

Alternative A: The No-Action Alternative (Continue Current Management)

The no-action alternative, alternative A, is required by the National Environmental Policy Act and provides the baseline from which to compare other alternatives. Under this alternative, current management practices would continue. The park would be managed in accordance with approved management documents.

Summary of Impacts from Implementing Alternative A. Impacts resulting from the no-action alternative would be negligible to minor on most natural resources and on park and concession operations. There would be long-term minor to moderate beneficial and adverse impacts on wilderness resources. There would be no adverse effect and some beneficial effects on archeological resources, historic structures, and landscapes, and negligible to minor adverse effects on ethnographic resources.

SUMMARY

Visitor access, recreational and educational opportunities, and visitor facilities and services would remain relatively unchanged, and the park would continue to be an important regional attraction, contributing to the tourism industry in the region. However, potential increases in visitation over the life of this plan could impact the visitor's ability to access frontcountry and wilderness, resulting in minor to moderate adverse impacts on park visitors.

Alternative B

Alternative B emphasizes cultural and natural resource protection. Natural processes would take priority over visitor access in certain areas of the park. In general, the park would be managed as a large ecosystem preserve emphasizing wilderness management for resource conservation and protection, with a reduced number of facilities to support visitation.

Boundary adjustments for the purposes of resource protection would be considered adjacent to the park in the Ozette, Lake Crescent, Hoh, Queets, and Quinault areas.

When compared with all the alternatives, this alternative would have less frontcountry acreage designated as development, and more acreage designated as low-use and day-use zones. This alternative includes the river and intertidal reserve zones. Within the wilderness, this alternative includes a larger primeval zone and a reduced wilderness trail zone when compared with the other alternatives.

Summary of Impacts from Implementing Alternative B. This alternative emphasizes the protection of park resources through the reduction in the number of facilities, roads, and trails to support visitation. There would be increased beneficial effects on the park's natural resources compared to alternative A. Impacts on wilderness values would be long

term and beneficial. Impacts on cultural resources would be the same as the no-action alternative.

Visitors would experience reduced facilities and access, resulting in moderate to major adverse effects on the visitor experience and park access. There would be limited improvements in the information, orientation, and educational programs, and most park information and interpretive facilities would not be improved.

The park would continue to be an important regional attraction. Some facilities that would be removed from the park could be supplied by the private sector, creating beneficial effects on local and regional economies. Some concessions facilities would be closed, resulting in adverse impacts.

Alternative C

This alternative would include a boundary adjustment in the Ozette area.

When compared with the other alternatives, this alternative would have increased acreages zoned as development and day use and decreased acreage in the low-use zones. This alternative would include intertidal reserve zones, but would not include a river zone. The amount of wilderness designated as wilderness trail would increase, but most of the wilderness would be designated as primeval.

Summary of Impacts from Implementing Alternative C. This alternative would increase the facilities and infrastructure in the park, and explore opportunities to develop partnerships and facilities outside the park. Generally, this alternative would have minor to moderate adverse effects on natural resources, cultural resources, and wilderness, and there could be beneficial effects on intertidal areas and in specific

areas where facilities could be modified or relocated for resource protection.

This alternative would emphasize increased recreational opportunities, improved facilities, increased or improved interpretive and educational programs, facilities, and media, and improved roads and facilities. This would result in moderate to major beneficial effects on visitor use and experience, information, orientation, education, and visitor access.

There may be beneficial effects on gateway communities as a result of increased visitation due to improved facilities and increased expenditure by the park for infrastructure upgrades. Concessions facilities would be improved, resulting in long-term minor beneficial effects.

Alternative D — Preferred

Alternative D is the management preferred alternative. It was developed using components of the no-action alternative, and alternatives B and C, using the factors identified in “Identification of Management Preferred Alternative” in Chapter 2. Under alternative D, management emphasis would be on protecting natural and cultural resources while improving visitor experiences. This would be accomplished by accommodating visitor use, providing sustainable access through mass transit, and concentrating improved educational and recreational opportunities in the developed areas of the park.

This alternative includes boundary adjustments in adjacent lands in the Lake Crescent, Ozette, and Queets areas.

This alternative includes slightly more development zoning in the frontcountry when compared with alternative B, and slightly less than in alternative C. This alternative has more day-use zoning than

alternative B, and more low-use zoning than alternative C. This alternative does not include the river zone. This alternative includes more wilderness trail zone and less primitive zone than alternative B, but more primeval zoning than alternative C.

Summary of Impacts from Implementing Alternative D. Alternative D would focus on balancing the protection of natural and cultural resources with improving the visitor experiences. As a result, the impacts on natural resources vary from negligible to moderate and adverse, and minor to moderate and beneficial. Implementing alternative D would result in long-term negligible to minor beneficial effects on wilderness values. There would be long-term negligible adverse impacts on archeological sites, beneficial effects on historic structures and cultural landscapes, and negligible to minor adverse impacts on ethnographic resources.

Compared with the no-action alternative, alternative D benefits visitor use and experience by providing more diverse recreational opportunities and improving facilities and services in the park. There would be increased interpretive and educational programs and new or improved interpretive facilities. Parkwide, facilities and infrastructure would generally remain at current levels, with some modifications (relocation of facilities or roads) or expansion opportunities. This would result in negligible to minor beneficial and adverse impacts on visitor access to the park based on access and transportation during peak periods versus off-peak periods.

The park would continue to be an important regional attraction. Most concessions operations would remain, but some expansion of the season of operation could occur, resulting in beneficial effects.

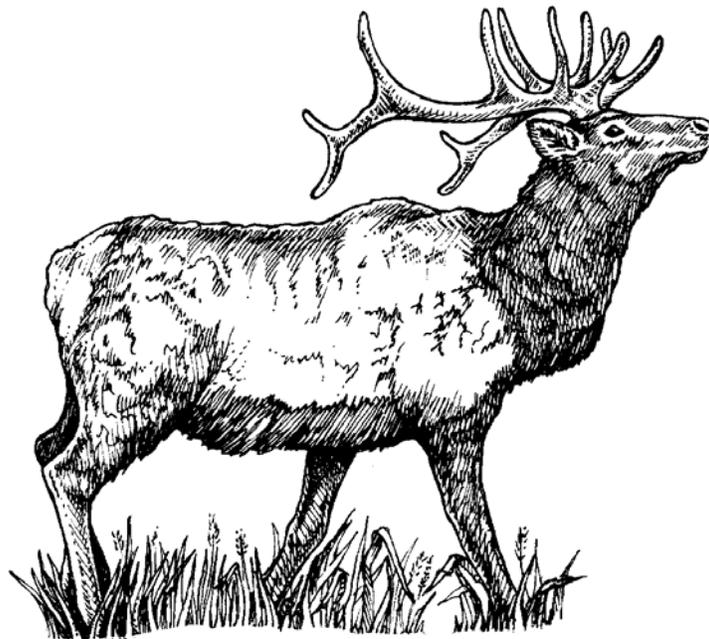
THE NEXT STEPS

After a 90-day public review and comment period, the NPS planning team will evaluate comments from other federal agencies, tribes, organizations, businesses, and individuals regarding the draft plan and incorporate appropriate changes into a *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement*. The final plan will include letters from governmental agencies, any substantive comments on the draft document, and NPS responses to those comments. Following distribution of the *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* and a 30-day no-action period, a “Record of Decision” approving a final plan will be signed by the NPS regional director. The “Record of Decision” documents the NPS selection of an alternative for implementation. With the signed “Record of Decision,” the plan can then be

implemented, depending on funding and staffing.

FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

A “Record of Decision” does not guarantee funds and staff for implementing the approved plan. The National Park Service recognizes that this is a long-term plan, and in the framework of the plan, park managers would take incremental steps to reach park management goals and objectives. Although some of the actions can be accomplished with little or no funding, some actions would require more detailed implementation plans, site-specific compliance, and additional funds. The park would actively seek alternative sources of funding, but there is no guarantee that all the components of the plan would be implemented.



A GUIDE TO THIS DOCUMENT

This *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* is organized in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's implementing regulations for the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Park Service's "Park Planning Program Standards" and "Environmental Analysis" (DO-12).

Chapter 1: The Purpose of and Need for Action sets the framework for the entire document. It describes why the plan is being prepared and what needs it must address. It gives guidance for the alternatives that are being considered, which are based on the national park's legislated mission, its purpose, the significance of its resources, special mandates and administrative commitments, and servicewide mandates and policies.

The chapter also details the planning opportunities and issues that were raised during public scoping meetings and initial planning team efforts; the alternatives in the next chapter address these issues and concerns to varying degrees. This chapter concludes with a statement of the scope of the environmental impact analysis — specifically what impact topics were or were not analyzed in detail.

Chapter 2: Alternatives, Including the Preferred Alternative, begins by describing the alternative concepts — Alternative A the continuation of current management and trends in the park, which is a no-action alternative, and the management zones that could be used to manage the national park in the future, and alternatives B, C, and D (the NPS preferred alternative). Mitigative measures proposed to minimize or eliminate

the impacts of some proposed actions are described just before the discussion of the alternatives considered but dismissed. The chapter concludes with summary tables of the alternative actions and the environmental consequences of implementing those alternative actions, and an analysis of the environmentally preferable alternative.

Chapter 3: The Affected Environment describes those areas, resources, and values that would be affected by implementing actions in the various alternatives, including, natural resources; wilderness values; cultural resources; visitor experience; information, orientation, and interpretation; visitor access; and the socioeconomic environment.

Chapter 4: Environmental Consequences analyzes the impacts of implementing the alternatives on topics described in the "Affected Environment" chapter. Methods that were used for assessing the impacts in terms of the intensity, type, and duration of impacts are outlined at the beginning of the chapter.

Chapter 5: Consultation and Coordination describes the history of public and agency coordination and compliance during the planning effort and lists agencies and organizations who will be receiving copies of this document.

The **Appendixes** present supporting information for the document, along with a glossary, references, and a list of the planning team and other consultants.

